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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

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Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Terrorism, a Threat to Near Eastern Stability

Irresponsible Near East nationalism, flaring up in terrorist outbursts like the assassination of King Abdullah, poses a potential threat to the pro-Western orientation of the Arab world.

The assassination of King Abdullah on 20 July was carried out by an Arab thought to be a member of the Holy War Fighters, a terrorist group first organized in the mid-1940's by the Arab Higher Committee, the political party recognized by the British as representing the Arabs of Palestine. The leading figure in the Committee was the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husayni, a Nazi sympathizer in World War II. Violently anti-British and anti-Jewish, the Mufti has been an open opponent of King Abdullah, whose annexation of the major part of Arab Palestine in April 1950 frustrated the Mufti's ambitions to form an Arab Palestine government.

In the Mandate period and during the Palestine fighting the Holy War Fighters were active chiefly against the Jews. The group was reportedly disarmed and disbanded at some point in the Palestine fighting by the Arab Legion, the British trained, officered, and financed army of Jordan.

A successor terrorist group of this same name, whose ultimate aim is to regain control over Palestine, was organized in March 1950 on instructions from the former Grand Mufti. [redacted] that Abdulla el-Tel, ex-colonel in the Arab Legion and former military governor of Jerusalem who broke with King Abdullah over the latter's attempts to make peace with Israel, had assumed leadership of the group.

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Recruits for the organization were sought mainly among the Palestine Arabs in refugee camps; money and arms were collected from sympathizers in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. It is not known how successful these campaigns were.

[redacted] contacts exist between the Holy War Fighters and the Moslem Brotherhood, a fanatical, nationalistic, terrorist organization which has caused trouble in Egypt and Syria. There are also reported links with the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party, which has promoted Iraqi-Syrian union. Its adherents have on occasion indulged in terrorist activities and were responsible for the recent murder of Riad al-Solh, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon.

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Other terrorist groups, such as the Brothers of Freedom, the Military Organization for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Palestinian Committee for Guerrilla Action are currently active in Arab areas. Connections

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have been reported among these groups and between them and the various elements of the Arab Higher Executive, the Mufti's current organization. Some individuals involved in the Palestinian Committee for Guerrilla Action are reputedly Communists, and the Moslem Brotherhood has likewise been charged with having on occasion received Communist support. There is no indication, however, of Soviet control or direction of the activities of any of the groups.

The disorders attendant upon terrorist activities will create opportunities that Communists can exploit. Moreover, the violence and brutality commonly exhibited in the suppression of terrorist activities -- such as the Arab Legion has displayed subsequent to Abdullah's assassination -- sow the seeds of further dissention.

With the exception of the Moslem Brotherhood, which has on occasion attracted a sizeable following, most of these organizations are numerically insignificant. These groups do not present a military threat to any government; rather it is the disruptive capacity of isolated acts of terrorism that creates the danger. Political assassination and the fear of it are a menace to the internal security of the Arab states and to the entire Middle East. Coupled with the increase in rampant nationalism and anti-Westernism, terrorism is a formidable deterrent to those Arab leaders who wish to reach a settlement with Israel or to cooperate with the West.

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